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Foreign Relations, 1969-1976, Volume E-7, South Asia, 1969-1972

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TELEGRAM

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ACTION NEA 15

INFO EUR 15.CIAE 00, JPM, 04,H 02, INR: 07,L 03, NSAE 00,NSC 10,p 04,
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AMEMBASSY KABUL UNN

AMEMBASSY KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW UNN

AMEMBASSY NEW DELH

AMCONSUL PESHAWAR

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN UNN

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SECTION1OF2RAWALPINDI1238/1

SUB: AYUB ADMINISTRATION'S PROSPECTS FOR SURVIVAL

REF: A. RAWALPINDI 1218 B.1219 C.1220

I. SUMMARY: THE AYUB ADMINISTRATION HAS FAILED TO COPE WITH THE POLITICAL CHALLENGES WHICH FACED IT DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS. AYUB'S FORTUNES ARE ON THE DOWN GRADE, AND HIS EVENTUAL WITHDRAWAL FROM POLITICAL SCENE MUST BE CONSIDERED LIKELY. HOWEVER, HE STILL HAS SOME ROOM FOR MANEUVER AND WILL CONTINUE EFFORTS TO SHORE UP HIS POSITION. NEITHER AN EARLY RESIGNATION NOR A RESORT TO MARTIAL LAW IS INCONCEIVABLE, BUT BOTH HAVE GRAVE DISADVANTAGES FOR AYUB, WHO IS MORE LIKELY TO SEEK OTHER SOLUTION. REFTELS ARE KARACHI, LAHORE AND DACCA RESPONSES TO EMBASSY REQUEST FOR VIEWS OF PRINCIPAL OFFICERS ON POLITICAL SITUATION, VIEWS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT EVEN WHEN NOT SPECIFICALLY REFERRED TO IN THIS MESSAGE.

2. NOW CLEAR THAT ADMINISTRATION HAS FORFEITED A GREAT PART OF ITS PREVIOUS SUPPORT BECAUSE OF ITS INADEQUATE RESPONSES TO NEW AND THREATENING POLITICAL CHALLENGES OF PAST THREE MONTHS THESE RESPONSES HAVE BEEN GRUDGING, TARDY AND INEPT IN WEST PAKISTAN AND HARSH AND UNCOMPROMISING IN EAST PAKISTAN. AS A RESULT PRESIDENT SUPPORTERS AMONG POLITICALLY-AWARE CLASSES HAVE LARGELY LOST HOPE AND CONFIDENCE IN REGIME OR HAVE BEEN SILENCED. DECLARED OPPONENTS HAVE MADE AYUB AND HIS FAMILY A PRIORITY TARGET IN A CAMPAIGN WHICH HAS BENEFITED BY WHAT NOW APPEARS AS STRONG AND WIDESPREAD DISLIKE OF THE REGIME.

3. HOW AYUB VIEWS HIS OWN POSITION AND PROSPECTS VERY UNCLEAR AT MOMENT. REPORTEDLY ISOLATED AT LEAST UNTIL RECENT PAST FROM OUTSIDE OPINION, IT IS YET DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT FLOW OF FACTS TO HIM IS NOT RPT NOT SUFFICIENT TO PRESENT HIM WITH REASONABLY ACCURATE PICTURE. (REGULAR READING OF DACCA OBSERVER ALONE WOULD DO THAT.) WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE, THEREFORE, THAT DESPITE ALL EVIDENCE TO CONTRARY, PRESIDENT MUST BE CONSIDERING, AND PERHAPS ACTIVELY AMONG OTHER OPTIONS, STEPS WHICH WOULD REMOVE HIM FROM SCENE AND YET PRESERVE SOME DEGREE OF SAFETY AND COMFORT FOR HIMSELF AND FAMILY.

4. HOWEVER, ON BALANCE WE DOUBT THAT PRESIDENT HAS COME TO CONCLUSION TO TAKE THIS STEP, AND IT SEEMS ILLOGICAL THAT HE WILL POSTPONE FINAL DECISION AT LEAST UNTIL OUTCOME OR "DIALOGUE" WITH OPPOSITION IS CLEAR, CONTENT HIS FEB 1 SPEECH AND FIRST REACTIONS TO IT INDICATE PROSPECTS FOR DIALOGUE ARE DIM AND AN IMPASSE WOULD PROBABLY THROW THE ISSUE BACK TO THE STREETS, FURTHER DETERIORATING AYUB'S POSITION. BOTH KARACHI AND DACCA HAVE NOTED THAT AYUB SEEMS TO BE LOSING THE SUPPORT AND CONFIDENCE OF EVEN

THOSE MEMBERS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT WHO BENEFIT FROM THE STATUS QUO AND WHO WOULD HAVE BEEN FIRM SUPPORTERS OF AYUB IN THE PAST, CONVERSATIONS IN WHICH PROSPECTS FOR REGIME ARE PICTURED AS ALMOST HOPELESS ARE INCREASINGLY REPORTED BY EMBASSY OFFICERS. ON THE OTHER HAND PAK TIMES EDITOR SULERI (RECENTLY REPORTED TO HAVE REPLACED GAUHARI AS PRINCIPAL CONFIDANT OF AYUB) IN A COLUMN TODAY CALLS FOR FULL PARTICIAPATION OF OPPOSITION ELEMENTS (INCLUDING BUHTTO, ASGHAR KHAN, MUJIBUN RAHMANI AND SUGGESTS AGAIN THAT DIRECT ELECTIONS AND FEDERAL PARLIMENTARY SYSTEM WILL BE TOPICS.)

5. AS LAHORE NOTED, AYUB IS LEFT WITH THE "APPARATUS OF POWER," IT IS A VERY FORMIDABLE APPARATUS, CAPABLE OF KEEPING AYUB IN OFFICE FOR A TIME, IF IT CAN BE PERSUADED TO LEND ITSELF TO HIS PURPOSES. IT IS PROBABLY WRONG, HOWEVER, TO CONSIDER APPARATUS, AND PARTICULARLY KEY MILITARY ELEMENTS, AS COMMITTED TO AYUB AS ANY INDIVIDUAL. THEIR LOYALTY IS MORE LIKELY DIRECTED TO THEIR SERVICE, AND IN A BROADER CONTEXT TO ENVIRON, AND CASTE INTERESTS. THE THREAT OF AN INTERNAL SOCIAL REVOLUTION, OR FEAR OF INDIAN MOVES AGAINST PAKISTAN, CERTAINLY, AND A RIVAL OF EAST PAKISTAN SEPARATIST ACTIVITY, POSSIBLY, WOULD FORCE THE APPARATUS INTO ACTION. HOWEVER, NONE OF THESE THREATS SEEM CLEAR ENOUGH TO REVERSE THE FALL OF AYUB'S FORTUNES AT THIS TIME, ALTHOUGH LAHORE AND DACCA HAVE NOTED THE POTENTIALITIES FOR SOCIAL UPHEAVAL AND REVOLUTIONARY MOVES. NEVER THE LESS, VERY QUIET MEETING OF CHIEFS OF STAFF AND DEFENSE SECRETARY (APPARENTLY IN RAWALPINDI LAST WEEK), AND ANNOUNCEMENT NUR KHAN'S TERM OF SERVICE AS AIR FORCE CINC EXTENDED ADDITIONAL TWO YEARS FROM JULY 1969 SUGGEST AYUB ACTIVELY SEEKING MAINTAIN MILITARY SUPPORT.

6. WE MUST CONSIDER THAT AYUB HAS GIVEN THOUGHT TO OTHER ALTERNATIVES. A WITHDRAWAL FROM POLITICAL LIFE, OR RESORT TO VERY STRONG MEASURES E.G. SOME FORM OF MARTIAL LAW, COME TO MIND. BOTH HAVE GREAT DISADVANTAGES. A WITHDRAWAL UNDER FIRE AND THE PRESUMPTIVE FORFEITURE OF HIS GREAT PLACE IN PAKISTAN'S HOSTORY SEEMS CONTRARY TO THE NATURE OF THE MAN. A RESORT TO MARTIAL LAW, MUST BE EQUALLY REPUGNANT AS AN ADDSSION OF POLITICAL FAILURE AND HAS OTHER PRACTICAL DISADVANTAGES IT SEEMS AT LEAST QUESTIONABLE THAT THE ARMED FORCES WOULD BE WILLING TO ASSUME A ROLE THAT SERVED SIMPLY TO CONTINUE AYUB IN POWER, AND QUITE POSSIBLE THAT REAL POWER AND AUTHORITY WOULD SLIP AWAY FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL OFFIICE IN SUCH A SITUATION. ANOTHER OPTION IN LINE WITH ADMINISTRATION'S STRATEGY SO FAR IS TO SIMPLY HOLD ON, TRY TO DEAL WITH DISTURBANCES BY LIMITED APPLICATIONS OF FORCE AND MINOR CONCESSIONS, AND HOPE THAT OPPOSITION WILL BE WORN OUT. IT IS CONCEIVABLE THIS COULD WORK IF MAINTAINED WITH SUFFICIENT RESOLUTION AND PERSEVERENCE BUT IT SEEMS LIKELY AYUB'S POSITION WOULD DETERIORATE EVEN MORE RAPIDLY.

7. HOWEVER, WE BEILEVE THAT AOB PROBABLY WILL SEEK THROUGH MORE BROAD RANGING DIALOGUE WITH OPPOSITION THAN INDICATE IN HIS FEB 1 SPEECH TO RESTORE POLITICAL CALM AT SAME TIME, RUMORS ABOUND RE HIGH-LEVEL PERSONNEL SHIFTS (PRINCIPALLY REPLACEMENT OF GOV. MONEM KHAN BY SOBUR KHAN AND ECIAPSEI OF GAUHARI. DEGREE OFF SUCCESS OF THIS EFFORT DIFFICULT TO FORESEE, BUT ITS FAILURE OBVIOUSLY WOULD PRESENT RESIDENT AND ESTABLISHMENT WITH DIFFICULT CHOICE

8. CONCLUSION: EVEN WHILE RECOGNIZING THAT AYUB HAS OPTIONS AND THAT THERE IS NO COMPARABLE NATIONAL LEADER IN PROSPECT WF CONCLUDE HE IS NOW MORE LIKELY TO GO THAN HOLD ON TO THE PRESIDENCY ALTHOUGH THE TIME FRAME, AND WHO AND WHAT FOLLOWS IS MURKY AT BEST.

OEHLERT

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